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S E R M O N

Preach'd before the

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St. James's Chapel,

On *Asb*wednesday, Feb. 14. 17¹⁰₁₁.

By the Most Reverend Father in God,
J O H N Lord Archbishop of T O R K.

Publish'd by Her Majesty's Special Command.

L O N D O N:

Printed for *W. Kettilby*; and for *W. Rogers* at the
Sun against St. Dunstan's Church in Fleetstreet:
And Sold there, and by *R. Wilkin* at the King's
Head in St. Paul's Church-Yard. 1711.



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Bring forth therefore Fruits meet for Repentance.

ALL the Duties of Christianity, or to speak more properly, all the Conditions that God hath required of us Christians in order to our Salvation, may be and are in Scripture reduced to these Two, *Faith* and *Repentance*.

It is the latter of these, *Repentance*, that this solemn Time of *Lent* we are now entering, obliges us to fix our Thoughts upon: And therefore I shall now make that the Subject of my Discourse.

And here my Business shall be to endeavour to settle the Notion of this great Duty, as it is made one of the Conditions of our Eternal Salvation.

Indeed it cannot but be observ'd, that People among us are very apt to be mistaken about this Matter; some taking that for true Repentance, which is not; and others, even very good People, entertaining great Doubts and Scruples concerning the Sincerity of their Repentance, when there is no Reason for 'em.

I shall therefore endeavour so to explain the Doctrine of Repentance, as that neither *Bad* Men may be encouraged to think they are true Penitents, when they are not; nor *Good* Men dis-

couraged from believing the Sincerity of their Repentance, notwithstanding the manifold Failures they apprehend in themselves, as to the Expressions of it.

You see I here speak of *Repentance*, not as of some single Transient Act or Actions, that are now and then to be perform'd by a Man upon Occasion: Nor only as it is a Man's first Passage from a Heathenish or a Wicked Life, to a Christian Life; which is that we call a Man's *Conversion*, and in which Sense it is often taken in the New Testament.

But I consider it as a Habit, a permanent State of Life, a Disposition and Qualification of Mind and Manners, which a Man must possess himself of, and continue in, as long as he lives; otherwise he is not to expect the final Remission of his Sins. And hence it is, that the *Good*, as well as the *Bad* among us, are taught in our *Publick Liturgy*, not only every Day to *confess our Sins*, but also every Day to pray God to *grant us true Repentance*. Having premis'd this, I come to the Argument:

Bring forth therefore Fruits meet for Repentance.

These are St. *John Baptist's* Words to the *Pharisees* that came to his Baptism. And from them we may gather, what that *Repentance* is, that will be available for the Forgiveness of our Sins, and securing us from that *Wrath to come*, which he speaks of in the Verse before; namely, it must be such a Repentance as brings forth worthy Fruits: *Bring forth (saith he) Fruits meet for Repentance;*

Repentance ; or as the Words may be rendred,
Bring forth the worthy Fruits of Repentance.

So that the Evangelical Repentance, which we now treat of, consists of *Two* Parts, or is made up of *Two* Things. The one *Inward* in our Minds, which is that we properly call *Repentance*, (*μετανοια*) and that consists in such a Sense of our Sins and Hatred of them, as makes us heartily sorry for them, and resolve to commit 'em no more. And this the *Pharisees* were presum'd to have, when they came to St. *John's* Baptism.

The other is *Outward*, and shows it self in our Lives; and that consists in the actual forsaking those Sins which we so resolv'd against. And this is that St. *John* here stiles the *worthy Fruits of Repentance*, or *Fruits meet for Repentance*.

This is certainly the Account which the Scripture every where gives of that Repentance which God requires of us, in order to the Forgiveness of our Sins: Only with this slight Difference; that sometimes the Inward *Contrition* has the Name of Repentance given to it; and the *Reformation* that follows thereupon, is call'd the *Fruits* of it, as here in my Text; at other times, the Reformation in our Lives is call'd by the Name of Repentance, and the Inward Sorrow and Contrition is reckon'd only as a Preparative or Disposition towards it; as when St. *Paul* tells us, 2 *Cor.* 7. 10. that *Godly Sorrow worketh Repentance*.

Well, but say some Persons among us, (who yet, as we have Reason to believe, are very good Christians) if this be the Notion of true Repentance,

pentance, then are not we in the penitent State. For we have neither that Sorrow and Contrition for our Sins, which true Repentance requireth ; nor do we bring forth the Fruits of Repentance, by reforming our selves as to several particular Sins which we have often begg'd Pardon for, and resolv'd against. These are the *Two Cases* which I shall now speak to, and I begin with the *First*.

They complain that they have not that *Sorrow* for their Sins, which is sufficient to denominate their Repentance True and Sincere. They can think of their many Offences and Provocations with dry Eyes ; and even at those times when they set themselves to express Acts of Repentance, and to make Confession of their Sins in a more solemn Manner : Yet all this is done with so much Insensibility, and so little Compunction, that instead of *Broken* and *Contrite Hearts*, which is the Sacrifice that God delights in, they come to these Offices rather with harden'd ones.

That which I say to this, is this : We are not to measure the Sincerity of our Contrition, by the sensible Expressions of Grief with which it is sometimes accompanied ; or to conclude, that we are not sorry for our Sins as we ought to be, because we are not put into a Passion at the Remembrance of them.

It is very certain a Man may have a true Sense of his Sins, and a hearty Contrition for 'em, and yet not be able to shed a Tear, even when he most devoutly sets himself to beg God Almighty's Forgiveness of 'em. And 'tis very certain on the other Hand, that a Man may weep abundantly at
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some Seasons, when he seriously reflects upon the great Miscarriages of his Life past, and yet not at all be truly penitent for 'em.

The truth is, that Part of Repentance we are now speaking of, consists rather in a Hatred of our Sins, in a deep rooted Aversion to them, than in any transient Passion of Grief that we can work up our selves to upon the Remembrance of them.

Whoever is so sensible of the infinite Evil of Sin, that he does from his Soul detest and abhor it; and thereupon resolves firmly against it, and uses hearty Prayers to God to subdue it in him by the Power of his Holy Spirit, and puts out his whole Strength to resist the Temptations of it; such a Man is a true Penitent. This permanent Hatred of Sin, and Resolutions, and Endeavours against it, is the Life and Soul of Repentance: And a passionate Grief or Sorrow doth no farther belong to it, than as it is an Expression of that Hatred, or a Means to produce those Resolutions and Endeavours against it.

But it will be urg'd, Can any Man be truly said to hate his Sins, that is not sensibly griev'd and troubled that he hath offended God?

To this I say, in the *Second* Place, Whoever is really affected with Hatred towards his Sins, can hardly avoid the being troubled and afflicted, whenever it is his Unhappiness to offend God in any Instance; nay, or when he seriously reflects upon his former Offences. But then these *Two* Things are to be remembered:

First, That there may be an Inward Grief or Affliction in the Mind, tho' the Man that feels it cannot

cannot express it in Tears, or other outward Passions. These are Things that depend wholly upon the Make and Constitution of a Man's Body, and not at all upon the Sense of his Mind. Some Persons are of such an easy, and flexible, and passionate Temper, that they can shed Tears upon very slight Occasions. Others, tho' they may have a more real and permanent Sorrow upon their Hearts, yet cannot evidence it in such ways.

But then, *Secondly*, As to this Business of Sorrow for Sin, there is a great Consideration to be had of the Nearness or Distance of the Time when the Sins we repent of were committed.

When a good Man, through his own Carelessness and Inadvertency, or through the Importunity of some strong Temptation, happens to do any thing contrary to his Duty, his Heart will presently smite him. As soon as ever he reflects upon the Action, he will be naturally apt to be displeas'd at himself. And upon his first Retirement and Examination of his Conscience, he cannot avoid the expressing a great Sorrow and Compunction for his Sin, and humbly and earnestly addressing to the Throne of Grace for the obtaining Forgiveness of it. And indeed, if he be not thus sensibly concern'd and afflicted, when the Action is fresh in his Memory and upon his Conscience, it is an Argument that he has not that Hatred of Sin, which he ought to have; and therefore has some Reason to suspect whether he be in the State of Repentance.

But then, for Sins that have been committed a good while ago, the Consideration is quite different

rent. If a Man set himself to exercise Acts of Repentance for his Sins in general, or for some particular Sin that he formerly had been guilty of ; in this Case it cannot be expected ordinarily, that his Grief should be so sensible, or express it self in so passionate a Manner : For indeed our Make and Constitution will not admit of it.

Such is the Contrivance of our Tempers, that the Remembrance of a Thing at a Distance, tho' we do endeavour to impress it upon our selves with all the Advantages we can, will hardly excite so great a Passion as the Thing it self did when it was present. Time wears off the Violence and the Impetuosity of the Passions ; tho' yet the inward Sentiments and Inclinations of the Mind, as to those Things that caused the Passion, may be the same perpetually.

That which I intend by this Consideration, is this ; That it is enough to testify the Sincerity of our Sorrow for Sin, if we be heartily troubled and afflicted, whenever we have newly committed any Sin against God : But if afterward that Trouble or Grief do wear off, and we cannot bring our selves to be so livelily affected with the thing after some Distance of Time, as we were at first, it is no Argument against the Sincerity of our Repentance ; supposing we continue in the same Hatred and Abhorrence of the evil Action, and in the same Resolutions not to be guilty of it any more.

But enough of this : I proceed to the other Case I mentioned in the Business of Repentance,

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and which indeed has more Difficulty in it, than that I have now spoken to. It is this ;

We hear very good People often complain, that tho' they are truly sensible of several Sins they are guilty of, and are sorry for them, and do over and over again resolve against them, nay, and daily put up hearty Prayers, that God would give them Grace to overcome them ; yet for all this they frequently fall into them again ; nay, and perhaps every Day : Now how can they be said to be true Penitents, that live after this Rate ? Is it not an essential Part of true Repentance to forsake the Sin, as well as to be sorry for it, and to resolve against it ? But they do not forsake the Sins they resolve against ; and therefore they have just Reason to conclude, that they are far from having true Repentance.

This is the Case ; and there is but one way of coming to a Resolution of it, and that is by a particular Enquiry what those Sins are which these Persons resolve against, and which yet they cannot, or do not conquer.

It is very certain, that in general speaking, Repentance, as it is propos'd as a Condition of Salvation in the Gospel, doth include in it a *forsaking* of Sin, as well as a *Hatred* of it, and a *Resolution* against it ; and consequently whosoever does not forsake his Sins is not a true Penitent. Thus far they are right.

But then on the other Side, 'tis very certain likewise, that a Man may be truly said to forsake his Sins in the Gospel Sense of forsaking them, tho' yet in the mean time he be far from living
without

without Sin. Nay, he may observe several Irregularities in his Actions, and be so sensible of 'em as to make Resolutions against them, and pray to God to preserve him from them, yea, and constantly strive to avoid 'em; and yet now and then through Inadvertency, or Surprize, or a great Temptation, be overtaken with 'em, and all this while be in the true State of Repentance. I say both these Points are certainly true.

As for the first, That forsaking of Sin is necessary to Repentance, there can be no doubt of it. The Scripture tell us, that he only that
** confesseth and forsaketh his Sins shall find mercy.* And *† they that are born of God do not commit sin.* And *∴ those that are Christ's have crucified the Flesh with the Affections and the Lusts.* And
** Prov. 18. 13. † 1 John 3. 9. ∴ Gal. 5. 24.*
 to live in Sin, or under the Power of Sin, is every where by our Lord and his Apostles, represented as a thing perfectly inconsistent with the being a Child of God.

But on the other Hand; That no Man (how truly a Penitent soever he be) doth live without Sin, is a Point every whit as plain from the Scripture as the former. St. James tells us, *cap. 3. That in many things we offend all:* And St. John, *1 John 1. 8. If we say we have no Sin, we deceive our selves, and the Truth is not in us.* And many other Passages there are to this Purpose.

That therefore that makes the Difference between a true Penitent and a pretended one, as to this Matter, must be the Nature, and Kind, and

Circumstances of the Sin that is left unmortify'd, or that the Man still lives under the Power of.

There are some Sins that do consist with a Repentant State, and some Sins that do not. There are likewise several Circumstances of the same Sin, that may difference or vary the State. It may happen that the same Sin, which in one Man is a *Weakness* or an *Ignorance*, and so consistent with the State of Repentance, will in another Man be a Sin of *Presumption*, and inconsistent with it. Concerning these things therefore, a particular Enquiry is to be made, before Satisfaction can be given to those that doubt of the Sincerity of their Repentance.

But first of all, before we come to speak of Sins that are consistent with a State of Repentance, and such as are inconsistent with it; it will be fit to ask those Persons, whose Case we are speaking to, whether those things which they are most apt to complain of, as Sins which they cannot overcome, but notwithstanding their Resolutions and Prayers, do often fall into 'em; whether, I say, they be really Sins at all?

It is very certain, that many tender Consciences (but uninstructed) do often reflect on, and severely call themselves to Account for several things, which God will never impute to 'em as Sins. Those that converse with this Sort of Persons, will frequently find that their greatest Complaints of unmortify'd Sins are made in such Instances as these: That they are out of Temper when they come to their Devotions: That they are troubled with many foolish and wandring Thoughts

Thoughts throughout their Religious Exercises. Tho' they endeavour to keep their Minds in a constant Sense of God and good Things, and would always profitably employ their Thoughts; yet Abundance of vain Imaginations do croud into their Heads, and render their Endeavours ineffectual. That they are often wearied with the Length of their Spiritual Offices, and pray without Life and Vigor. And in a word, That they cannot govern their Minds, but in Spight of all their Resolutions, Abundance of impertinent, and sometimes undecent and sinful Fancies do disturb, and quite spoil their most serious Attempts to live a Religious Life.

But now if they would well consider, they would be convinc'd that these kind of things are not so much their *Sins*, as their *Imperfections*. They are the necessary Results of the Union of their Souls with earthly Bodies, and therefore can by no means be called their Faults, so long as they do not willingly give way to 'em, but strive against 'em.

A Man may every whit, with as much Reason, accuse himself of Sin, when he cannot attend his Worldly Business with the same Vigour and Application of Mind, that he doth at other times; as he ought, when he does not pray and meditate upon Spiritual Things so vigorously and intensely as at some times he doth, supposing he endeavour it.

The Truth is, neither of these Things is always in our Power, because they depend altogether upon the Temper of our Bodies, which we cannot oftentimes correct or alter: And what is not in a Man's Power, the not doing of it cannot be

be a *Sin*. There is this Essential to every Sin, that there must be something of the *Will* in it. Whatever a Man doth, or whatever a Man omits, if it be involuntary in him, if he cannot help it, it may be his *Imperfection*, but it is not his *Sin*. And this will extend farther than to those Instances that I have now nam'd. Even all the sudden Motions and Inclinations that Men do often find arising in themselves to that which is Evil, if they be not consented to, if they be not in the least indulged and encouraged, but heartily rejected and strove against; these, even these will not prove Sins, but only Imperfections and Infelicities. Which, if it be true, , (as I see no Reason that any Man has to doubt of it) one great Part of those Things which the Religiously Melancholy are apt to complain of, are by this quite struck off.

Well now, but as for these Things that are really Sins in them, let us enquire how far they are consistent or inconsistent with the State of Repentance. Now the Resolution of this Enquiry will depend upon the Answers to these Three following Questions:

First of all, the general Question is this ; **Do** they seriously and impartially set themselves against all Sins whatsoever ? Do they harbour no Affection or Kindness for one Lust more than another, but use their hearty Endeavours to mortify all, and to conform themselves in all things to the Laws of Jesus Christ ? If they can say this of themselves, it is an evident Argument that their Repentance is true, tho' they may

may labour under many Frailties and Corruptions.

The Insincerity of a Man's Repentance is commonly discovered by this, that he is more sensible of some kind of Sins than he is of others, and is accordingly *partial* in his Endeavours to mortify 'em. Those Sins that are more conducing to his Interest, or to which he has more strong Temptations from his Temper and Inclination, or from his Company or Circumstances of Living; these he has not the same Aversion to, nor takes that Pains to avoid, that he has and does with Respect to others, that do not recommend themselves to him upon those Accounts. This now is an undeniable Proof that the Man doth not hate Sin purely for its self, or purely because it is displeasing to God, but because it is not so pleasing or profitable to himself. He hath not the Temptations to that Sin, that he hath to others; and therefore he takes Care not to be guilty of it. But where a Man can satisfy his own Mind, that he doth impartially lay out his Endeavour, for the subduing and destroying in himself, every thing that God hath declared against in his Holy Gospel; and spares no evil Affection, how dear or how advantageous soever it may be to him in this World; but fights and strives as well against those Corruptions that are rooted in his Nature, and serve his Worldly Ends, as those that he hath no such great Temptations to: Such a Man hath the undoubted Marks of a sincere Penitent, and may, in the Gospel Sense, be truly said to have forsaken his Sins, and to keep God's Com-

Commandments, notwithstanding the many Slips and Failures that he may be even daily guilty of. But to come more particularly to the Point :

The *Second* Question to be asked is this : What Kind of Sins are those that these Persons complain they have not overcome, but notwithstanding their Prayers and Resolutions they are often guilty of them ? Are they such as may be call'd *Presumptuous* Sins, or such as may be only call'd *Infirmities* and *Frailties* ? Are they such as cannot be committed without Deliberation, and full Choice and Consent of the Will ; or such as they may be surprized into thro' Inadvertency, or sudden Temptations ? If they be of the former Sort, that is to say, wilful, deliberate Sins, it is certain they cannot stand with the State of Repentance. Either the Man that is guilty of them was not a good Man, or ceased to be so upon his committing them.

Of this Kind are *Murder, Adultery, Blasphemy, Perjury, Slander, Extortion, Cheating, Defrauding,* and the like. These Sins, and such like, are in themselves so very foul, and require so full a Consent of the Will to be guilty of 'em, (for let Men talk what they please, no Man was ever guilty of such Crimes as these, but he either had no Sense of Religion at all ; or if he had, he deliberately abandoned himself to Vice and Wickedness) that it cannot be conceiv'd, how one single Act of 'em can be reconcileable with the State of Repentance. Either the Man was not a true Penitent when he fell into them, or he ceases to be so upon the committing of them. But

But *Thirdly*, As there are some single *Acts* of Sin, which are inconsistent with the State of Repentance, namely, *wilful, presumptuous Sins*; so likewise is every *Habit* of Sin inconsistent with it; I mean every *Habit* of known, open Sin. And therefore these Persons are in the last Place to be asked, Whether the Sins they have not yet conquered be of that Nature or no?

If the Sins they complain of, consist in *Actions* known to be against the Laws of God, and they customarily continue in them, I dare not say that they are yet in the State of Repentance. For tho' perhaps every particular *Act* of such Sins that they are guilty of, may not be attended with those aggravating Circumstances, as to make it amount to one of those wilful, presumptuous Sins I before spoke of; yet if the Sins be habitual and customary, they will, I am afraid, fall under that Denomination.

But then these Persons are to be careful, that they do not mistake that for a *known, open Sin*, which really is not so: Or a *Habit* of known Sin, for that which is not a *Habit*. I shall represent the Difference in these Three following Particulars:

First of all, When we speak of known, open Sins, we mean such Sins as a Man is guilty of in his *Actions*. And therefore we make a Distinction between the Inward Irregularities of the Mind, which consist in unlawful Desires or disorderly Passions; and between the Outward Actions. Tho' the former be truly sinful, if in the least consented to; nay, and we ought seriously to endeavour to mortify them in our selves, as much

as we can : Yet if thro' the Man's conscientious Care to suppress them, they do not proceed to Overt-Acts, they are not such known, open Sins as we here speak of.

Thus for Instance : A Man that is rashly and intemperately angry upon any Occasion, this very Passion is a Sin in him, and he ought to ask God Forgiveness for it : But so long as he doth so stifle this Passion, and that out of a Sense of Religion, as not to suffer it to break out into Unchristian Railings and Revilings ; nor is he transported thereby to do any Action in Pursuance of it, that the Laws of Jesus Christ have forbid : I say, this Man, notwithstanding the Sins of his Thoughts, may yet be said to be free from those known, open Sins, which if they be Habitual are inconsistent with Virtue.

Bu on the other Hand, where we see a Person to have no Government of his Passion, but upon every slight Occasion to break out into violent Rage, and in that Rage to say and do all those provoking things that his present Fury can suggest to him : Here is now a Man that is not only guilty of a known Sin, but it hath so much Dominion over him, that he may be said to live in it ; and consequently he is not yet in the State of Repentance.

I instance in this Particular of *Wrath* and *Anger*, both because it is a Sin that so ordinarily happens in the Course of our Lives ; and because that even the very worst Expressions of it, are generally accounted but our Weaknesses and Infirmities. Whereas certainly they are downright Works

Works of the Flesh, known Sins against the Law of God and such, as if they be continu'd in, if they be habitual, are destructive of Salvation.

Secondly, In Order to the giving an Account of known, open Sins, as we must distinguish between the Sins of the *Thoughts*, and the Sins of the *Actions*: So likewise as to the Sins of our Actions, we must further distinguish between those of 'em that consist in *Omission*, or not doing the things that the Law of God hath commanded us; and those that consist in *Commission*, or doing such things as the Law of God hath forbidden us. Now it is this latter Sort of Sins we here speak of, and of which we say, if they be habitual they cannot consist with the State of Repentance.

As for Sins of *Omission*, very good Men may be guilty of 'em; nay, and in many Instances, and that habitually too. Nay, perhaps I may say the best Men cannot clear themselves, as to this Sort of Sins; for I believe all Men fall short of doing that good they are bound to do.

But as for Sins of *Commission*, the Thing is otherwise; Good Men do usually avoid them, but to be sure they do not make a Trade or Custom of them; or if they do, I doubt they are not good Men or sincere Penitents. For I take it, whoever in his Conversation or Actions, ordinarily or customarily, practiseth any thing that is expressly forbidden by the Laws of God; such an one cannot be said to have *mortify'd the Deeds of the Body*, and to have *put off the Works of the Flesh*; which yet in the New Testament is every where

made the Character of one that is in the Regenerate, Penitent State.

To give an Instance of this : The Sin of *Swearing* in our Conversation, or the Sin of *Lying*, or the Sin of *Filthy and Lascivious Talking*, (I instance in these Sins, because some People may look upon 'em to be very light and inconsiderable, as not having in them that Mischief and Malignity, which is discoverable in other Crimes ; yet I say) these Sins being so expressly forbid by the Laws of our Lord Jesus Christ ; and being likewise Sins in the Outward Actions, and consequently certainly in our Power to avoid 'em, so that we cannot plead either Ignorance or Infirmitiy for them : I say, whosoever lives in the Practice of these Sins, cannot reasonably be thought to be in the State of Repentance, because he cannot be presum'd to make any Conscience of transgressing the express Laws of our Saviour.

Well, but are not Sins of *Omission* also Transgressions against the Laws of God ? I answer, they must be so if they be Sins. But then there is this Difference, that in the Duties which God has commanded us to do, we are often left in such a Latitude as to *Time*, and *Place*, and *Manner*, and other Circumstances ; that no Man can say, you are bound to do such an Action just at such a Time, and in such a Manner, otherwise you sin against God. So that if a Man through Mistake or Inadvertency, do omit an Action that he ought to have done ; why in that Case, when he comes to see his Mistake, or find his Carelessness, he will be

be sorry for it, and ask Pardon of God for his Omission of the Duty : But yet this Omission will amount to no more than a Sin of Weakness or Infirmary; which we have said all along, is very consistent with the State of a good Man.

But now where God hath *forbid* any Action to be done, the Case is quite different. For in that Case every body knows, that that Action is at all Times, and in all Places, and in all Circumstances, unlawful to be done by him : So that no body needs to be put to deliberate whether he should do it or no, for every body knows he ought not to do it. And if after this a Man will venture to do such an Action, which he knows to be thus forbidden by God; sure he contracts a greater Guilt than he would do, by the Omission of a Duty, as to the timing of which no Law of God had determin'd him.

But now, notwithstanding this Difference I make between Sins of Omission, and Sins of Commission, I must yet own, that there may be such Instances, and such Degrees of Sins of *Omission*, as, if Care be not taken that they be amended, will prove as fatal to the Man that is guilty of 'em, as if he lived in a Course of open, known Sins of *Commission*.

As for Example; What shall we say of a Man that never joins in the Publick Worship of God, or that never receives the Sacrament, or that never says his Prayers, or confesseth his Sins, or useth any Devotion either in his Family or in his Closet? Or lastly, What shall we say of a Man that is bless'd with plentiful Circumstances in this World, and yet gives little or nothing away in
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Charity? Why, all these are but Omissions of our Duty, but yet they are such Omissions, as whoever continues in 'em, is never like to go to Heaven. Nay, how damnable this last Omission I nam'd, is, you may see in the 25th Chap. of St. *Matth.* where our Saviour passeth the Sentence of Condemnation on *the Goats on his Left Hand*, for no other Reason, but purely for the not exercising Works of *Charity* towards their Brethren, according to their Abilities and Opportunities.

But now such Sort of Omissions as these, are quite out of the Case I am speaking to. For I have here to do with Persons that have really a hearty Sense of Religion upon their minds; and therefore to be sure can never be guilty of such gross, wilful, criminal Omissions, as I have now mentioned. And that which they desire to be satisfy'd in, is not how far they may neglect their Duty; but after they have done all they can towards the Performance of it, whether they have yet so forsaken their Sins, as to be in a state of Repentance? Now as to that, I say, so long as they do not live in known Sins of Commission, the Omissions they may be frequently guilty of, will not, I hope, hinder them from being true Penitents, and in a State of Salvation.

But, *Thirdly* and *Lastly*, Besides what we have said about known, open Sins, we must also, in order to the Resolution of the Question before us, consider another Thing, and that is, Whether they be *Habitual* or no? And for the finding of that, we must have Regard to the *Frequency* or *Infrequency* of 'em. Every Act of Sin
does

does not make a Habit ; and a known Sin may be more than once committed, and yet not be customary.

If a Man do sincerely endeavour to mortify, or to forsake his known, open Sins, tho' he does not leave them at once, and for altogether ; yet if he gains Ground of them, and commits them feldomer and feldomer : Even such a Man may be said to have enter'd into the State of Repentance. And tho he has not attain'd to that Strength and Perfection which the Gospel proposes, and which if he continue his Endeavours, there is no doubt but he will arrive to ; yet in the mean time he's in a very good way. And if he should dye before his Work be accomplished, yet having the true Seeds and Principles of Regeneration or Repentance in him, I should not doubt but God will accept him as a sincere Penitent, and receive him to his Mercy. These are the Things that I had to represent in Order to the answering this Question, *What sort of forsaking of Sins is necessary to true Repentance* ; and which every Man is to examine himself about, if he would upon good Grounds satisfy himself, whether the Sins he is guilty of in the Course of his Life be consistent with it or no.

The Sum of all that I have said upon this Head is this: If a Man upon such an Examination can satisfy himself, as to these following Particulars; namely,

First, That he doth in the Course of his Life, sincerely apply his Mind and Endeavours, to mortify every evil Affection and to live in an uniform Obedience to all God's Commandments.

And,

And, *Secondly*, That the Sins he is guilty of, are not gross, wilful, deliberate Crimes; but rather the Effects of Inconsideration, or Surprize, or a sudden Temptation.

And, *Thirdly*, That they do more consist in the Irregularities of the Desires, and Appetites, and Passions of his Mind, than in the customary Gratification of those Appetites and Passions in his Actions.

And, *Fourthly*, That they are mostly Matters of Omission of his Duty, and not so much express'd in Instances forbidden by God's Laws.

And *Lastly*, That of what Nature soever they be, tho' he has not actually subdu'd them, and got the Victory over them, yet he gains ground upon them, and doth not so frequently repeat them, and when he doth, it is in smaller Instances, and upon greater Temptations, and with less Interruptions of his Religious Course:

I say whosoever can satisfy himself, that the Sins he is most frequently guilty of in the Course of his Life, are of this Nature, and fall under these Circumstances; such a Person needs not in the least doubt, but that for all them he is in the State of Repentance, and shall find Mercy with his Heavenly Father.

God Almighty grant to us all true Repentance, and his Holy Spirit, that the rest of our Life hereafter may be pure and holy, so that at the last we may come to his Eternal Joy, through Jesus Christ our Lord: To whom, &c.

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